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ABSTRACT

The following are some of the findings based on the results of the annual survey of marital and family characteristics of workers: (1) about 27.6 million of 62.7 million children had mothers in the labor force (over 2 million more than in March 1970); (2) 1.1 million of 6.5 million children under six were in families headed by women (71 percent more than in 1970); (3) the number of children in two-parent families has decreased since 1970; (4) families with working mothers had fewer children; and (5) children whose mothers were employed were families with considerably higher incomes. More black children (48 percent) than white children (38 percent) in two-parent families had employed mothers. Three tables include the following information: (1) number of children under 18 years old, by age, type of family, mother's labor force status, and race, in March 1970 and March 1975; (2) number of families and average number of own children under 18 years old, by type of family, mother's labor force status, and race, in March 1970 and March 1975; and (3) number of children under 18 years old, median family income in 1974, type of family, parents' labor force status, and race, in March 1975. (Author/EC)

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SUMMARY

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR Bureau of Labor Statistics

SPECIAL LABOR FORCE REPORT

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Children of Working Mothers, March 1975

Between March 1970 and March 1975, the total number of children under age 18 in families dropped substantially, while the number of children whose mothers were working or looking for work increased. Of the 62.7 million children in March 1975, about 27.6 million had mothers in the labor force, a little over 2 million more than in March 1970 (table 1).

Most of the children of working mothers were old enough to be in school, but 6.5 million were under age 6. About 1.1 million of these preschoolers with working mothers were in families headed by women, 71 percent more than in 1970. Over the same period, the number of working mothers--both wives and women heading families--advanced from 12 to 14 million (table 2).

In March 1975, as in other years, most children were in families in which both their mother and father were present. However, the number of children in 2-parent families has decreased since 1970, reflecting the unprecedented decline in the birth rate as well as a marked increase in divorce and separation. This latter development

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has been a major factor in the recent upsurge in families headed by women and in the number of children with working mothers in such families. On average, divorced women with (and without) children have higher labor force participation rates than married women. Another factor is the long-term increase in the number of never-married mothers who head families; there were 930,000 in March 1975.

In March 1975, as in previous years, families with working mothers had fewer children, on average, than those families with mothers who did not work outside the home. This held true for families headed by women as well as for 2-parent families, and for white as well as for black families.

Also, whether in 1- or 2-parent families, white or black, children whose mothers were employed were in families with considerably higher income, on average, than were children whose mothers were unemployed or not in the labor force (table 3). For example, among white children in husband-wife families, median family income in 1974 was about $18,000 if the mother was employed, compared with $14,000 if she was not in the labor force. Corresponding figures for black children were about $13,700 and $8,500. A greater proportion of the black children (48 percent) than white children (38 percent) in husband-wife families had employed mothers, and the black mothers' contribution to family income clearly reduced the gap between their respective families' income.

These findings are from the annual survey of marital and family characteristics of workers, conducted for the Bureau of Labor Statistics by the Bureau of the Census. Additional information will be published in a forthcoming issue of the Monthly Labor Review.

Table 1. Number of children under 18 years old, by age, type of family, labor force status of mother, and race, March 1970 and March 1975

(NUMBERS IN THOUSANDS)

ITEM	AGE OF CHILDREN, 1970			AGE OF CHILDREN, 1975		
	UNDER 18 YEARS	UNDER 6 YEARS	6 TO 17 YEARS	UNDER 18 YEARS	UNDER 6 YEARS	6 TO 17 YEARS
TOTAL CHILDREN 1/	65,755	19,606	46,149	72,725	18,150	54,575
MOTHER IN LABOR FORCE	25,544	5,590	19,954	27,619	6,539	21,081
MOTHER NOT IN LABOR FORCE	39,550	13,923	25,627	34,213	11,481	22,732
HUSBAND-WIFE FAMILIES	58,199	17,920	40,479	52,611	15,687	36,924
MOTHER IN LABOR FORCE	21,982	4,947	17,035	22,595	5,439	17,155
MOTHER NOT IN LABOR FORCE	36,417	12,973	23,444	30,016	10,248	19,769
FEMALE FAMILY HEAD 2/	6,695	1,593	5,102	9,221	2,333	6,889
MOTHER IN LABOR FORCE	3,562	643	2,919	5,024	1,099	3,925
MOTHER NOT IN LABOR FORCE	3,133	950	2,183	4,197	1,234	2,963
OTHER MALE FAMILY HEAD 2/	661	93	568	892	130	762
WHITE CHILDREN, TOTAL	58,903	16,940	39,963	63,601	15,550	38,050
MOTHER IN LABOR FORCE	21,194	4,459	16,735	22,962	5,322	17,640
MOTHER NOT IN LABOR FORCE	35,244	12,424	22,820	29,445	10,127	19,768
HUSBAND-WIFE FAMILIES	52,336	15,975	36,361	47,086	14,008	33,078
MOTHER IN LABOR FORCE	18,865	4,083	14,782	19,546	4,601	15,044
MOTHER NOT IN LABOR FORCE	33,471	11,892	21,579	27,441	9,407	18,034
FEMALE FAMILY HEAD 2/	4,102	908	3,194	5,770	1,440	4,330
MOTHER IN LABOR FORCE	2,329	376	1,953	3,316	720	2,596
MOTHER NOT IN LABOR FORCE	1,773	532	1,241	2,454	720	1,734
OTHER MALE FAMILY HEAD 2/	465	57	408	744	102	642
NEGRO CHILDREN, TOTAL	6,854	2,381	5,673	9,093	2,276	6,817
MOTHER IN LABOR FORCE	4,015	1,031	2,984	4,160	1,101	3,059
MOTHER NOT IN LABOR FORCE	2,849	1,315	2,534	3,741	1,149	2,642
HUSBAND-WIFE FAMILIES	5,335	1,683	3,652	4,598	1,377	3,222
MOTHER IN LABOR FORCE	2,810	775	2,035	2,508	729	1,779
MOTHER NOT IN LABOR FORCE	2,525	908	1,617	2,090	647	1,443
FEMALE FAMILY HEAD 2/	2,529	663	1,866	4,353	873	2,480
MOTHER IN LABOR FORCE	1,205	256	949	1,652	371	1,281
MOTHER NOT IN LABOR FORCE	1,324	407	917	1,700	502	1,199
OTHER MALE FAMILY HEAD 2/	190	35	155	142	26	116

1/ CHILDREN ARE DEFINED AS "OWN" CHILDREN OF THE FAMILY HEAD AND INCLUDE NEVER MARRIED SONS AND DAUGHTERS, STEP-CHILDREN, AND ADOPTED CHILDREN. EXCLUDED ARE OTHER RELATED CHILDREN SUCH AS GRANDCHILDREN, NIECES, NEPHEWS, AND COUSINS, AND UNRELATED CHILDREN.

2/ WIDOWED, DIVORCED, SEPARATED, AND SINGLE FAMILY HEADS.

NOTE: BECAUSE OF ROUNDING, SUMS OF INDIVIDUAL ITEMS MAY NOT EQUAL TOTALS.

Table 2. Number of families and average number of own children under 18 years old, by type of family, labor force status of mother, and race, March 1970 and March 1975

ITEM	1970		1975	
	NUMBER OF FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN UNDER 18 YEARS OLD (THOUSANDS)	AVERAGE NUMBER OF CHILDREN PER FAMILY 1/	NUMBER OF FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN UNDER 18 YEARS OLD (THOUSANDS)	AVERAGE NUMBER OF CHILDREN PER FAMILY 1/
ALL FAMILIES				
HUSBAND-WIFE FAMILIES	25,547	2.29	25,169	2.04
MOTHER IN LABOR FORCE	10,210	2.15	11,322	2.00
MOTHER NOT IN LABOR FORCE	15,337	2.37	13,847	2.17
FEMALE FAMILY HEAD	2,924	2.29	4,402	2.04
MOTHER IN LABOR FORCE	1,731	2.06	2,635	1.91
MOTHER NOT IN LABOR FORCE	1,193	2.63	1,767	2.37
WHITE				
HUSBAND-WIFE FAMILIES	23,285	2.25	22,722	2.07
MOTHER IN LABOR FORCE	8,970	2.10	9,947	1.98
MOTHER NOT IN LABOR FORCE	14,315	2.34	12,775	2.15
FEMALE FAMILY HEAD	1,994	2.05	2,971	1.94
MOTHER IN LABOR FORCE	1,237	1.88	1,864	1.78
MOTHER NOT IN LABOR FORCE	757	2.34	1,106	2.22
NEGRO				
HUSBAND-WIFE FAMILIES	2,001	2.67	2,013	2.28
MOTHER IN LABOR FORCE	1,120	2.51	1,172	2.14
MOTHER NOT IN LABOR FORCE	881	2.87	842	2.48
FEMALE FAMILY HEAD	912	2.77	1,382	2.43
MOTHER IN LABOR FORCE	485	2.48	742	2.23
MOTHER NOT IN LABOR FORCE	427	3.10	641	2.65

1/ SEE FOOTNOTE 1, TABLE 1.

NOTE: BECAUSE OF ROUNDING, SUMS OF INDIVIDUAL ITEMS MAY NOT EQUAL TOTALS.

Table 3. Number of children under 18 years old, median family income in 1974, type of family, labor force status of parents, and race, March 1975

(NUMBERS IN THOUSANDS)

ITEM	ALL CHILDREN		WHITE		NEGRO	
	NUMBER	MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME IN 1974	NUMBER	MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME IN 1974	NUMBER	MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME IN 1974
TOTAL CHILDREN 1/	62,725	$ 13,327	53,601	$ 14,160	8,093	$ 7,637
MOTHER IN LABOR FORCE	27,619	14,608	22,962	15,755	4,160	9,852
EMPLOYED	24,957	15,214	20,637	16,568	3,580	10,354
UNEMPLOYED	2,662	10,965	2,325	12,203	581	6,479
MOTHER NOT IN LABOR FORCE	34,211	12,498	29,895	13,273	3,791	5,975
HUSBAND-WIFE FAMILIES	52,611	14,608	47,086	15,326	4,598	11,055
MOTHER IN LABOR FORCE	22,595	17,311	19,646	17,659	2,508	13,214
EMPLOYED	20,328	17,770	17,746	17,997	2,197	13,737
UNEMPLOYED	2,267	13,039	1,900	13,557	311	10,878
MOTHER NOT IN LABOR FORCE	30,016	13,494	27,441	13,988	2,090	8,533
FATHER EMPLOYED	45,962	15,715	41,632	16,212	3,616	12,101
MOTHER IN LABOR FORCE	19,847	17,908	17,467	18,160	2,088	13,849
EMPLOYED	18,088	18,222	15,979	18,425	1,805	14,285
UNEMPLOYED	1,760	13,565	1,488	14,218	282	11,114
MOTHER NOT IN LABOR FORCE	26,114	14,213	24,165	14,548	1,569	9,761
FATHER IN ARMED FORCES	1,484	12,004	1,270	12,348	154	9,956
MOTHER IN LABOR FORCE	544	13,276	448	13,310	72	2/
EMPLOYED	450	11,308	376	13,178	59	2/
UNEMPLOYED	94	13,224	72	2/	11	2/
MOTHER NOT IN LABOR FORCE	940	10,986	822	11,522	83	5,180
FATHER UNEMPLOYED	3,114	10,936	2,628	11,230	421	9,458
MOTHER IN LABOR FORCE	1,413	12,336	1,119	12,899	254	11,566
EMPLOYED	1,077	12,866	845	13,128	209	12,107
UNEMPLOYED	336	10,273	273	11,351	44	2/
MOTHER NOT IN LABOR FORCE	1,701	10,019	1,509	10,433	167	6,962
FATHER NOT IN LABOR FORCE	2,951	7,673	1,556	8,134	407	6,288
MOTHER IN LABOR FORCE	790	9,652	612	9,470	135	8,343
EMPLOYED	713	10,004	546	9,881	124	9,510
UNEMPLOYED	77	6,454	66	2/	11	2/
MOTHER NOT IN LABOR FORCE	1,260	6,602	944	6,972	272	5,739
FEMALE FAMILY HEAD	9,221	5,077	5,770	5,667	3,353	4,342
MOTHER IN LABOR FORCE	5,024	6,575	3,316	7,248	1,652	5,511
EMPLOYED	4,329	6,998	2,892	7,599	1,382	5,983
UNEMPLOYED	695	3,755	425	4,190	270	3,179
MOTHER NOT IN LABOR FORCE	4,197	3,980	2,454	4,140	1,700	3,723
OTHER MALE FAMILY HEAD	892	10,825	744	11,317	142	7,446

1/ SEE FOOTNOTE 1, TABLE 1.
2/ MEDIAN NOT SHOWN WHERE NUMBER IS LESS THAN 75,000.

NOTE: BECAUSE OF ROUNDING, SUMS OF INDIVIDUAL ITEMS MAY NOT EQUAL TOTALS.

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